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Letter dated 26 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the statement on the Gambella region, issued on 25 March 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Richard **Ryan**
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 26 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Statement on the Gambella region issued on 25 March 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union

The European Union wishes to express its concern at the sporadic but persistent outbreaks of extreme violence in the Gambella region of Ethiopia, which have resulted in hundreds of deaths over recent months. While noting the actions taken by the Government of Ethiopia to stabilize the area, the European Union emphasizes the need for government security forces and military to act in an impartial and lawful manner if tensions between the various ethnic groups in the region are to be reduced. The European Union calls for a public and independent inquiry into suggestions of involvement by members of the Ethiopian military in violence directed against innocent civilians.

The European Union notes the ethnic dimension to the violence and calls upon the Government of Ethiopia to work with traditional leaders, non-governmental organizations and local church groups to heal divisions between Anuaks and highlanders, and to re-establish trust and stability in Gambella.

The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.